

Dag Heward-Mills



Church Growth Principles

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by Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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Chapter 1 - Eight Principles for Church Growth

The following are principles that I have discovered for building successful and large churches. I advise you to carefully consider them and allow the Lord to give you a deeper understanding of what I am teaching in this chapter.

1. The principle of the multiplied senior pastor

I have discovered that if you could multiply the senior pastor by twelve, it would mean that you had twelve pastors at work. Logically, you could do twelve times as much work.

I taught my assistant pastors to do whatever I do. If I meet people after church,

they should also meet people after church. If I am able to counsel ten people and twelve other pastors are able to counsel ten people, that makes it one hundred and thirty people who are being attended to.

There are some churches in which the senior pastor is a “superman”. He is the only one who does anything important - and that is a sure recipe to keep your church small.

One person can only attend to a certain number of people. If you try to visit, counsel and help everybody, you will go crazy! There is a limit to what you can do. That is why I have many branches and many pastors.

I believe that many of the people I preach to can also preach. I believe that many of the people who are receiving the Word now, are capable of rising up into the ministry.

Do not be an insecure senior pastor. Don't be afraid to trust people. It is true that many people will betray your trust, but if you live in fear, Satan will have access to your life and ministry. I have been hurt by some people, but I have decided to still trust others to help me. If they betray me one day, I will take it in stride and keep on trusting some others.

One of the reasons why some people cannot trust is because they do not believe that people can do a good enough job.

In the medical field, young doctors are being trained all the time. Some people are always attended to by inexperienced student doctors under supervision. As the young doctors are allowed to have a go at practising medicine, they learn and soon they are just as good. It is the same thing in the ministry. People must be trusted with responsibilities under supervision. They must be allowed to do important things. This will multiply the number of capable pastors in the ministry.

2. The principle of maximized Sunday usage

This principle has been stretched to its fullest at the Lighthouse Cathedral in Accra. The principle of using Sunday to its fullest is effective because traditionally, people have dedicated Sunday to both resting and going to church.

Since so many of the church members are available on Sunday, it is only wise to use Sunday to its fullest. Sunday is a full working day for me. Jesus worked on Sundays and I would like to follow His example.

And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My father worketh hitherto, and I work.

John 5:16,17

Sunday is a full working day for all lay pastors in our church. We work hard from Sunday morning until late Sunday evening. We are able to accomplish a lot of counselling because people are free on Sundays.

Visitation is also very effective on Sundays because many people are at home on Sunday afternoons.

We conduct Bible schools for lay people on Sunday afternoons. Many people are able to attend because they don't have much to do on Sundays.

Decide to utilize your Sundays. I don't know what pastors are doing in their homes at two o'clock on Sunday afternoon when most of the church members are available to be ministered to. Take advantage of this opportunity. Lay pastors and shepherds will be able to do more work for the Lord.

Although some people find it difficult to accept, I emphasize to all the people I work with, that Sunday is a full working day for me and my church.

I am not an accountant or a computer programmer. My working hours are not Monday to Friday from nine to five. I work on Sundays and I rest on Mondays. We do not start work at eight o'clock in the morning. I see no reason to go to work at eight o'clock in the morning. We stay late in the evenings because that is when many lay people are available for us to minister to them.

Our office is usually closed on Mondays, and all of our staff, except the security officers, have a day off. Pastors and churches must not allow the world to impose its schedule on us.

When airplane pilots go to work at odd hours no one complains. Everyone accepts that their work demands a different type of work schedule. Pastors and non-pastoral people must realize that the work of the ministry is peculiar and goes with its own special working hours.

Begin to consider what you can do with your Sundays. Think of how many more people you can attend to if your Sundays are used for ministry instead of being used for sleeping and having lunches in the afternoon.

3. The principle of smaller sub-divisions

Smaller sub-divisions within the church allow for better pastoral care, which eventually leads to church growth. Questions that cannot be asked in a large Sunday service can be addressed in the small groups. The small groups become the family units to which church members belong.

I have several smaller groups within the church. I have always believed that every Christian can and should actively serve the Lord. These smaller groups allow for all Christians to get involved.

As your church becomes mega, it will remain small enough to meet the needs of all the people. As it is said, "Large enough to include you, and small enough to know you."

Some people's churches are like large convention centres. People come in, hear the Word, and go away. No human being likes to feel that he is not known. People are not numbers; they are human beings.

Nobody wants to be reduced to a numbered article or a countable commodity. People want to feel important. People want to feel necessary. People want to feel loved.

You may preach a powerful sermon but, they still need to belong to a little family.

Your church can be broken into cells, divisions or departments. Our church has chapels, ministries and fellowships. I am always encouraging my members to get involved in one ministry or the other. How can I know all the people who come to church? How can I know what they think or feel? How can I know their problems and how can I help them?

If you think that God is going to give you a word of knowledge about these people everyday, you are making a mistake. God expects you to break up your church into smaller divisions so that the people can receive adequate pastoral care.

4. The principle of the “person X” oriented church

What on earth is a “person x” oriented church? I define “person x” as a new convert or a new member. Most churches are oriented towards established members. A “person x” oriented church is very concerned about new people and visitors. Treat your visitors well.

We make song sheets so that the new people can get involved during the praise and worship. After the service, we host a reception to allow our new members to feel at home.

We also give gifts to new converts. Recently, the Lord directed me to direct my most senior associates to handle all new converts. God told me that if new converts were important to me, then I should allow senior ministers to take care of them rather than junior leaders.

This has helped tremendously to establish many new people in the church. When a church is “person x” oriented, it is on the road towards increase because, growth will come through new members and converts.

And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour...

1 Corinthians 12:23

Most people think that growth comes because more people visit the church. This is not necessarily the case. Some people also think that growth takes place because more converts are won. History has shown that the population of this world has increased because people are being kept alive and not because more people are being born. If we want our churches to grow, we have to sustain and maintain our new members and converts.

5. The principle of catering for group A and group B members

Every church can be divided into group A and group B members. Group A members are the more reliable people; they attend church twice or more a week.

They are often involved in other small group activities in the church life. Thank God for Group A members. We really appreciate their input.

Group B members on the other hand, are the once-a-weekers, non-small group members, early service lovers, short sermon lovers, mind drifters, day dreamers, Bible forgetters, non note-takers, non tithe payers, clock-watchers and the church-near-me attendees.

These group B members will form an important segment of your church, as it becomes a larger entity. You will have to accept them as part of the family. You can choose your friends, but you cannot choose your brothers. Not everybody is going to be a prayer warrior.

In fact, in a large church many of the people fall into group B. Love them anyway. Preach sermons that they can also appreciate. Pray for them. The Spirit of the Lord will work on them.

Sometimes when you organize a social event like a beach party, the group B members will flood the place. Use such opportunities to minister to them.

If you try to filter out your group B members, you may be left with nothing at the end of the day. Jesus said that the harvest is plenteous but the labourers are few. Jesus didn't say that there were few members; He said that there were few labourers (Group A members).

6. The principle of multiple services

Nobody ever told me that multiple services lead to church growth. I discovered it almost by accident.

Well, now I am telling you that multiple services lead to church growth.

We have seven different services every Sunday morning. It is very tiring and draining, but our church attendance is better because of these multiple services.

As the church grows, people with all sorts of needs come into the church.

Some pastors give the impression that they conduct multiple services because they have such a large crowd. This is true to some extent. But I do not have multiple services because the building can be filled four times over. Not all the services are full. Each service has a different level of attendance. I have never seen multiple services where all the services have the same attendance.

I conduct multiple services primarily to make a variety of convenient services available to my members.

I am always amazed at why people will want to come to church at 6 o'clock in the morning. I always ask myself, "Can't they come to church a little later?" Human beings are so varied. Once you are dealing with a large number of people you are dealing with variety. If you don't make variety available, you will lose those for whom you have nothing to offer.

Accept the reality of variety and flow with it. You will notice that different types of people come to each service. Some of the services are more formal whilst others are more relaxed.

The type of people who attend each service determines the type of atmosphere you get. We have services for the youth and for the children. We have services for different languages. We have several services for English-speaking members.

Each of these services is different and there are people to fit into all of these services. God will bless your church as you provide variety for more people.

7. The principle of dynamic church services

You must have a goal for each service you conduct. When determining the goal of the service, you must ask yourself, "What am I trying to achieve with this service?" Are you planning to raise the dead, to heal the sick, or to preach and teach?

In the Lighthouse Cathedral, our Sunday morning services are teaching and worship services. We do not usually pray for the sick on Sunday mornings. We pray for the sick on other days.

How much time have you allotted for each service? How long should the service be? Our services are one and a half hours and two hours each. Within two hours, you can do everything that you need to do for a church service.

Many years ago, I attended a church whose services began around eight o'clock in the morning and ended at about three o'clock in the afternoon. After attending twice, I decided that the service was too long.

Today, that church is non-existent. When your Sunday services are too long, you will drive away all of your members. You cannot achieve everything on a Sunday morning.

We conduct miracle services which can last for several hours. We have camp meetings at which I can preach for more than twelve hours in a day. At a Shepherds' Camp Meeting of my church, I preached from 6:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. on one of the days with only two short breaks.

I know how to have long meetings, but I'd advise you not to use your Sunday services for such things.

What type of meeting place do you have? Man looks on the outward appearance, so it is important to decorate your church nicely. Even if you do not own a church building, let your place of meeting attain a certain standard.

Remember that you have only one chance to give a first impression. Make use of flowers, baskets, curtains or anything that would improve the physical appearance. Sometimes the pastor does not have very good taste. How can you know if you do not have good taste? He would have to rely on others in the church to help in enhancing and brightening his corner.

It is important that every church tries to acquire its own place of meeting. Owning

your own facility introduces more stability to the church.

How do you present yourself? God looks on the heart, but man looks on the outward appearance. Man cannot see your heart. Man can only see your outward appearance. That is why your outward appearance is also important.

We must seek to put up a good outward appearance in addition to preparing the right heart for the Lord.

Everyone who plays a part in the service must be well dressed. Male pastors must be formally dressed and neatly shaved. Female pastors must be properly dressed and must not wear suggestive or indecent clothing.

Some church musicians look like agents from the world who have been temporarily contracted to help God. These instrumentalists often come in with the attitude and culture of secular pop groups. That is why I insist on all my musicians dressing like pastors. If they cannot afford it, we buy clothes for them!

Altar calls should be made at every service. This important and good habit must be maintained at all costs. New converts and visitors must receive a warm welcome. Remember, these are the “person x” members.

The assisting pastor should take over and briefly emphasize the message of the senior pastor. He should also encourage the congregation to buy tapes.

Pastors must not run off after church. They must stay and mingle with the congregation for some time after the service. I question the call of someone who says he’s a pastor but does not want to mingle with his congregation after the service.

The shepherd’s place is in the field amongst the sheep. A true shepherd smells of sheep. I remember meeting a frustrated congregant in a church. This man had travelled many miles to attend a conference. He wanted to have a chance to say hello to the great man of God. He was so frustrated that he became bitter. I met him in a lift and he said to me bitterly, “Is this man a prime minister or a pastor?”

But I have been to other conferences where the men of God made the effort to stay around and mingle with the sheep. Some people just want to shake your hand. Give them the opportunity to get near if you can. A pastor’s wife must help with the interaction and must be seen to be a warm and friendly person. All these things contribute to building the mega church we all desire.

8. The principle of using technology and research

As the number of passengers on different airlines has increased, their efficiency has improved. This is because airline industries have used technology to help them in their work. Whilst the membership of most churches has increased over the past few years, the pastor’s ability for handling larger crowds has not been developed.

In our church, we try to keep an accurate data and statistics department. We

maintain accurate counts and figures of everything. We have developed our own pastoral care monitoring system which we call the “Pastoshep”.

In spite of the limitations due to limited addresses and telephone numbers in Ghana, our Pastoshep has become a reliable and technological method of assessing the work of all pastors and shepherds alike. Without being there to physically see what people are doing, my computer tells me what everybody is doing. I decided long ago to allow technology to help me to do the work of God.

Too many pastors say things like, “The whole church building was full.” They say things like, “Thousands of people were here today.” In reality, just a few hundred were present. Let’s have real numbers! We sometimes do surveys in the church to find out different interesting things. For instance, we did a survey to find out how many members of the church had ever been visited by a pastor. The results of that study were certainly revealing!

Chapter 2 - Six Principles for Church Growth

1. The 80-20 principle

This rule teaches us that eighty per cent of your increase comes from twenty per cent of the people. This means that eighty per cent of church growth is as a direct result of the work of twenty per cent of your members. Therefore, it is important for every pastor to spend more time with the twenty per cent who will bring church growth.

Often the leaders, teachers and pastors make up this twenty per cent. They are the most important people in the church. More time, personal interaction and prayer with this twenty per cent will give you amazing results that you never expected.

Some pastors spend most of their time with the rich and influential. They do not know that they are spending time with the wrong group. Spending time with rich people does not make your church grow. It rather makes the rich people more important than they really are. It can make the rich people stubborn and difficult to pastor!

A church with a future will identify potential leaders and put them to work. When you do this, you are looking out for the twenty per cent who can bring about sustained church development.

When I visit our churches outside the headquarters, I spend more time with the leaders and pastors than with the rest of the church.

Often I just minister in one service. Afterwards, I have various meetings, spending several hours with the pastors and shepherds. This style of activity does not come naturally. It is born out of the knowledge of the 80-20 principle.

When you implement the 80-20 principle, you may initially think that you are doing

the wrong thing, but that is not the case. You will soon discover that this simple principle is a secret of church growth.

2. The principle of the scholarly pastor

By this, I simply mean that pastors should develop themselves academically. I have never been to Bible school; I only attended medical school.

Yet, I have learnt so much about the ministry by reading. I always have several books that I am reading at the same time. I believe in reading, studying and acquiring knowledge. How could I rise above the handicap of having no formal pastoral training? Only by reading!

There is a difference between ministers who read books and those who do not. Those who do not read are no better than those who cannot read! Those who do not read are doomed to be ruled by those who do read.

Paul the apostle was a reader of books and parchments. He deemed his books so important that he asked Timothy to bring them to him.

...when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

2 Timothy 4:13

Prophet Daniel read the books that Jeremiah wrote.

In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

Daniel 9:2

People like Daniel and Paul read books. It is no surprise that they went far in ministry.

There are many ministers who also need some secular education. They would do well to educate themselves in important subjects like administration, law, medicine and history.

Administration is important in a church because many aspects of the church have to be run in a secular way. Things have to be managed properly. Accounts have to be prepared. Salaries have to be determined and paid. People have to be employed and dismissed. Things simply have to be done properly. A good study of administration and management will do the church of God a lot of good.

The study of law is also important for pastors and churches. Churches enter into contracts and the law of contract becomes important. There are laws that affect property acquisition. The law of property then becomes important to the pastor. There are laws that concern marriage. Pastors have to be well versed in the laws that exist.

God does not want His ministers to be ignoramuses. I am not a lawyer, but I know

quite a bit about law because I have taken an interest in it for my own sake.

A good understanding of medicine is also important. A pastor, like a doctor, often deals with terminally ill people. There is no use in a pastor not appreciating the conditions of their members. It is important to have a basic understanding of what is going on around you.

I have seen pastors declaring healing based on ridiculous and presumptuous premises. How absurd we sometimes look to the professionals of this world! They know we are completely unlearned in certain areas.

Another area that pastors need a bit of education in is history and politics. History shows the rise and the fall of tyrants. It shows trends which keep repeating themselves.

The Bible says that there is nothing new under the sun. In fact, the Bible predicts that the past will repeat itself over and over again. For those of you who want to know the future - it is basically the past repeated.

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

Ecclesiastes 1:9,10

3. The principle of having a power ministry

If you cut out all the Scriptures on healing and miracles from your Bible, you will discover that your Bible is totally destroyed! You will be destroying the Word of God. When you take out the Scriptures concerning the power of God, you are left with a book on philosophy.

It is not only the teaching and preaching which helps God's people. God's children also want to receive a touch of His power. It is important to add on the power dimension of miracles, healings and deliverance. The Holy Spirit wants to manifest Himself and bless the people of God. You will discover that your people love to be prayed for. It is important for you to pray for your sheep and minister God's power to them.

4. The principle of pastoral individuality: fulfil your call

It is very important for every pastor to fulfil his individual call. Don't look to the crowd. Don't think about what others are doing.

Many years ago when I started out in ministry, many people laughed at me. One pastor ridiculed me as I encouraged my members to go out and witness from door to door.

He sneered at me and said, "What is witnessing? What is door to door witnessing? We have moved on into higher realms of ministry!"

I answered, "It is an important Christian activity."

I stressed, "No matter how big you become in the ministry, it is important to preach the Gospel from house-to-house."

Today, that pastor who scoffed at me is struggling at the bottom of the ministerial ladder. Please do not allow anyone to drown your convictions. Be a man of conviction. Follow the plan that God has given to you. Comparison is one of the dangerous practices of certain ministers. Please do not compare yourself with anyone else, it is too dangerous.

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

2 Corinthians 10:12

God told me not to compare myself with anybody. He showed me how certain ministers were uneducated and that His expectations of different people varied. He also showed me that my background of prolonged education made Him give me a different standard. He told me that I would be wrong to compare myself with anyone else.

The Lord also showed me that if I used other ministers as a standard, I may do far less for Him than I am supposed to. The Lord showed me that I would mistakenly think that I had "arrived" because I had used certain low standards that had been set by others. It is indeed a dangerous thing to compare yourselves with others. Paul said that he dared not compare himself with others.

5. The principle of massive organized prayer

Massive organized prayer involves gathering all of your leaders and/or members for intensive prayer. I do massive organized prayer on three levels. At the highest level, I frequently organize the senior ministers away from the city to pray for a few days.

At the level of cell leaders, we often decree what we call prayer sentences. Sometimes we "sentence" the shepherds to twenty hours of prayer within a three-week period. This means that they have to meet as a group and pray for twenty hours spread over three weeks. This is massive organized prayer - organizing prayer on a massive scale.

Finally, we involve the whole church in prayer. There are times we have all-night prayer and fasting meetings everyday for an entire week. I am always surprised when on a weekday the church is full at 2 a.m. Working people gather to pray intensively for church growth and breakthroughs.

There is no other way to make any progress in the ministry than to work in the realm of the spirit. The Bible says, "Epaphras was always labouring in prayer." The principle of massive organized prayer is what you need to bring about a breakthrough in your ministry.

Epaphras...always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Colossians 4:12

There are some people who see me as an administrator and a strategist. Anyone who knows me closely knows that as I write this book, I do not even have a desk or an office. But I do have a study where I pray and I do have places where I spend time praying. There is no short cut in the ministry. There is no other way than that which has been set by the Lord. There is no other example than that which has been set by Jesus.

Peter said that he wanted to give himself to prayer and the Word. Prayer and the Word are more important than administration and strategies!

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Acts 6:4

6. The principle of using lay people to do the work

One of the great secrets of a large church is in the use of lay people or voluntary church workers. These volunteer workers can do most of the church work. I have several pastors who are not paid a dime for all of their hard work. The Lord pays them Himself. They work very hard on Sundays and other evenings. They make huge sacrifices in their private lives in order to be pastors and shepherds.

Many very big churches use this principle and are succeeding. May the Lord give you understanding and revelation concerning this vital principle.

I am always saddened when I see a small church of one hundred people employing seven full-time pastors.

I often ask myself, "How much will one pastor be paid? Do the wives of these pastors work? Do they make enough money to survive?"

Such environments are the breeding grounds for discontented and rebellious elements!

Many church rebellions are related to money. When money is left out of the ministry, people are able to concentrate on the work of the Lord because they love God.

Many pastors in my church are doing well as lay pastors. If some of them were to come into full-time ministry, things may change. The church may be able to pay them enough money, but they may not be at the stage where they are ready for full-time ministry. New problems relating to salaries and income levels may arise. These problems have the potential to disrupt the work of ministry.

I suggest this to every senior pastor: analyze the church conflicts you have ever had. Aren't most of them related to money? Make use of unpaid people. They are

the key to a peaceful and stable church environment! I see a ministry growing! I see your ministry growing! I see you rising up in the Kingdom of God! I see you taking your place! I know the Lord is going to use you! He has determined to use you! The mega church is for you! The anointing is yours! Rise up with wisdom and possess what the Lord has placed before you!

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